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ABSTRACT

Events and conditions over the last 20 years that have altered the course of higher education are briefly noted, and trends in higher education for the early eighties are examined. Among the past influences on higher education that illustrate the wisdom of planning for a realistic period of time, such as five years, are the following: the massive state funding of programs for the handicapped and special education laws, the government and court mandate to desegregate dual systems of higher education, affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation, and the recession. Trends in higher education for the early 1980s include the following: there is a decline in the number of students of traditional college age; changes in the retirement laws in 1982 will have an immediate impact on higher education; increased controls will be exercised by state governments; there will be movement toward standardization of programs, funding, and limitations of mission and scope; increased fuel costs will reduce weekend trips home by students at many universities; there may be an oversupply of doctors, lawyers, and veterinarians; a serious problem has been created by deferred maintenance and renovation; there will be opportunity for greater selection in securing new faculty and staff; the liberal education component will become a focal point; there will be greater involvement in public service activities; exchange programs with other universities will increase, both in and out of the country; and there will be a trend toward the reallocation of resources. An excerpt from Senate Bill No. 2977 of the Mississippi Legislature, regular session 1980, which addresses the development of a management information system plan and reports that should be made to the state legislature, is appended. (SW)

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HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE EIGHTIES

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James D. McComas

An Address Presented at a Conference
Sponsored by The Faculty Development Center
For Faculty and Staff
Lake Tiak O'Khata
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A few years ago the faculty I was associated with initiated a new Ph.D. program. As a prelude to the program we secured some of the outstanding professors in both public and private universities to look to the future and suggest possible approaches for meeting needs in the years ahead. Representatives of universities with well established graduate programs and those with newly established programs were in attendance at this special conference. The conference was both stimulating and helpful; but looking back over the thirteen-year period, I am amazed at the small number of resource personnel who predicted trends in their areas of specialization with any degree of accuracy.

When we review the history of higher education for the last twenty-year period, we find a number of events and conditions which altered the course of higher education and indeed of our larger society. Massive Federal aid made available through elementary and secondary and subsequently higher education acts created shortages of personnel when surpluses had been predicted.

Special education laws and massive state funding for the programs for the handicapped have carried over to higher education and had a significant impact upon both facilities and programs. The Federal Courts and the mandate to desegregate dual systems of higher education have transferred programs from one university to another and in a recent case given a university campus in one system to a university in another system.

HE 013 393

Affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation have had a marked influence on the process for the recruitment of new personnel. For example, at the present time our Cooperative Extension Service is under a court order to achieve a specified ratio of black to white personnel. This comes several years after a dual extension system has been essentially desegregated. At the same time Federal legislation and policy are making it permissible for 1890 universities (the black land-grant institutions) to secure funds for the operation of extension programs, without a clear understanding of how this action will avoid a return to a dual system. Fortunately, good will and good relationships between Alcorn State and our own university have made it possible for the two universities to work together cooperatively.

Who could have looked ahead a few years ago and predicted the impact and influence that the war in Vietnam would have on higher education, its programs, its internal and external relationships with constituent groups, and the adversary relationships which developed both on and off the campus?

Who predicted ten years ago our energy shortage and the impact it would have on our economy and higher education? Who could have predicted the scope of our fixed and increasing costs and the change in these dimensions of university budgets?

Who predicted fifteen years ago that public confidence in most social and educational institutions would have a lower credibility and would meet increasing criticism? Who predicted ten years ago that state legislatures would become demanding and controlling not only in funding but in the nature and emphasis of programs in higher education?

Who would have predicted a year ago that the recession would reduce revenues in states such as Arkansas and Oregon to such extent that painful cuts in the budget for higher education must be considered?

These are just a few of the events which make it increasingly difficult to look into the future for an extended period of time, such as a decade, and have any confidence in long-range predictions and projections. A few years ago Nova, Walden, and other universities without walls (and some with them) moved into the continuing education market with vigor and considerable resources. Many of these universities have not done so well because they exploited students in these new programs, used faculty members whose retirement systems were assured by other universities, and offered credit for life experiences and employed other non-traditional approaches. Today, most of these universities are on the edge of bankruptcy, if not bankrupt. Antioch College and its branch campus in Washington, D.C., Nova with its offerings across the country, and more recently Northern Colorado University have felt the pain and penalty of what many would characterize as a quick and easy graduate program.

These examples are presented to illustrate that higher education would do well to project and plan for a realistic period of time, such as five years, if planning is to have meaning and if trends are to have reasonable interpretation. With this in mind, perhaps we should focus on trends in higher education for the early eighties.

A. There is a decline in the number of students of college age as we traditionally view the college population. There are several implications as we see a trend toward stable enrollments on some campuses and declines on others. Funding for higher education during the past twenty years was based on student enrollment growth. Credit-driven formulas must now be reconsidered with inflationary costs which have resulted in administrators having less and less flexibility. Increased costs in

energy, books, supplies, travel, fringe benefits, minimum wage, and other areas mean that even if enrollment declines, the increase in per-unit costs does not permit any economic gains. Our current planning efforts show that nearly every academic unit is projecting an increase in student enrollment or at least a stable enrollment when all indications are that the university will experience some decline in its student population.

B. Changes in the retirement laws in 1982 will have an immediate impact on higher education. Within recent years some universities had developed plans and incentives to encourage faculty members and staff to consider early retirement. Employing faculty and staff members for at least five years more will have the immediate impact of increasing the cost of higher education and delaying entry of many new Ph.D.'s and other doctoral graduates into higher education. Today's senior professor's salary is about double that for an inexperienced professor fresh out of graduate school. Too, the burden will be placed on the university in the future to retire faculty and staff based upon the individual's inability to perform at a satisfactory level rather than an arbitrary age for retirement.

C. Increased controls will be exercised by State government. One has merely to review the accompanying language in this year's appropriation bill (see attachment) to see the demands the legislature is making on our trustees and our universities. It is also true that state legislatures are more and more emphasizing undergraduate education to the detriment of graduate programs and research.

D. There will be movement toward greater standardization of programs, funding, and limitations of mission and scope. A recent action of our Board of Trustees in mandating developmental programs at our three comprehensive universities based on common criteria, quotas for admissions exceptions, and an inquiry regarding proficiency in English suggests that there is a trend toward standardization. A Board of Regents in another state has mandated a common course description for all undergraduate courses offered within state institutions. Our new management information system will allow more detailed analyses and perhaps more comparisons to be made among and between universities. As a part of this trend there will likely be tighter definitions regarding what constitutes a full teaching load, minimum class sizes at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and a greater accountability in what courses and programs may be offered. Despite recent approval of new doctoral programs, those which have had a long history of underpopulation will be under pressure to close or consolidate. Out-of-state and certainly foreign travel to conferences by more than one person will require greater justification. Perhaps the trend will be to have more regional and fewer national meetings. The frequent practice of an entire department attending a national conference for the major part of a week will likely be altered with $100 per day hotel charges and high air fares. Roundtrip air fare at the present to Atlanta is $190, to New Orleans $198, to Memphis $156, and to Washington, D.C. between $308 and $320.

E. Increased fuel costs will reduce weekend trips home by students at many universities. This trend could have more positive than negative benefits to both the student and the university. How many students may be found on Friday morning or Friday afternoon on university campuses? Most of us will agree that the students who leave our campus on Thursday or Friday and return late Sunday night or early Monday morning are physically tired; and it takes a super effort to keep many of them interested and awake after the weekend. I see the trend just cited as encouraging students to make better use of libraries on the weekend and to be much

better prepared for Monday classes. By the same token, student affairs personnel must plan more activities; and there must be more effort made on and off the campus for programs and activities for our students which will ward off student boredom and behavior problems.

F. New areas may experience saturation. It may be a surprise to many, but a number of leaders in medical education will quietly tell you that we are headed for a surplus of doctors; and some indicate that a surplus already exists. (There is a maldistribution of this population, however.) Correspondingly, crowded conditions are evident in the legal profession, and some predictions have been made of a surplus in Veterinary Medicine. All of these surpluses are predicted on the basis of projections which assume little or no change in these professions or the traditional populations they serve.

G. A serious problem has been created by deferred maintenance and renovation. Currently our university is delaying the paving of some of its 32 miles of streets, replacement of roofs of its 18 acres of buildings, replacement of heating and cooling equipment, trucks, office and laboratory equipment. The cost of repainting the campus water tower exceeds the cost of a faculty member's salary for a year. The replacement of our isotope equipment needed now is about $200,000. Some universities which have not given close attention to maintenance and repair are near a real crisis. In our own case, we must be able to secure increased funds in this area. (We will have spent over one-half million dollars to improve ventilation and safety systems in Hand Lab during a three-year period.)

H. There will be opportunity for greater selection in securing new faculty and staff. In many of our programs today we are able to select a better prepared and more capable faculty or staff member. Unfortunately, some departments and colleges have not altered their expectations or procedures in identifying new talent. In too many cases not enough effort is made in identifying potential staff members, and in an amazing number of cases the extra telephone calls and reference checks are not made.

I. The liberal education component will become a focal point. Many colleges of arts and sciences during the last decade experienced a professionalization of the disciplines. On many campuses the undergraduate programs and "service courses" provided for students in professional schools were provided almost entirely by teaching assistants. We see what could become a trend for colleges of arts and sciences as many seek to redefine common courses for their own majors, and there could be a return to universitywide courses required of students enrolled in professional schools.

J. There will be greater involvement in public service activities. Comprehensive universities in general and land-grant universities in particular will become increasingly involved in community planning, the improvement of governmental units and planning, energy efforts, environmental problems, economic development, and continuing education in a broad range of areas. To his credit, our Governor appears to have a broader vision of what our universities can contribute to the state in a variety of public service areas. I hope that we can implement many of the activities which could make a pronounced contribution to the state and at the same time develop a new appreciation of and additional support for higher education.

K. Exchange programs with other universities will increase, both in and out of the country. Faculty development and renewal may be stimulated in a variety of ways. We now have open to us the opportunity to exchange faculty members with

other southeastern universities. Often the change for a year in a new environment with new colleagues provides opportunities to gain new ideas and insights and renewal which provide rewards for the individual and the university. Opportunities exist too for student exchanges both here in the states and in other countries. The same can be accomplished with other countries where there is a fluency in English.

L. There will be a trend toward the reallocation of resources. We already see this trend in many universities. Nearly all universities are experiencing growth in some areas while experiencing some enrollment declines in others. With limited increases in funding for higher education the implications are apparent that both personnel and program funds may at times be shifted to recognize changed needs and priorities. I hope, with careful planning, the negative aspects associated with reallocation can be reduced or minimized.

One university president recently stated, "We clearly do not expect to do things less well in the future, but it is quite clear that we may need to be doing fewer things to protect the quality of our efforts."

These are some of the trends which may affect our university during the early part of the eighties. Some of the trends have taken shape, but the degree to which they increase or impact on our state and our own university may be influenced by those of us within the university community as well as those outside of it. Not all of the trends which are emerging should be considered in a negative light. For example, despite the fact that our legislature has become more controlling in its intent and efforts in general, there is a very positive climate in both the house and senate. I do not know of a single legislator who could be labeled as hostile to higher education, although some are more sympathetic than others, and some have greater appreciation and insight into the potential contributions which higher education can make to our state.

Lyman A. Glenny in a recent article identifies and elaborates on birth rates, high school preparation and remediation, adult education, projected college enrollments and other trends. I commend his article for your review.*

To date we have not had to lay off faculty or staff or discontinue needed programs, and each year we have experienced an increase in our budget. We do have to deal with increasing uncertainties, some degree of tentativeness, and a frustrating amount of ambiguity. Despite these conditions we are maturing as a comprehensive university and have opportunities to grow not necessarily in terms of new students and a lot of new programs but in terms of teaching, research, and service. Together we can identify ways to improve the quality and scope of our instructional program. Together we can expand the quantity of our research programs and improve the quality of both student and faculty research efforts. Together we can extend and expand the influence of our campus to a wide range of off-campus groups and efforts. And together we can improve communications in quantity, quality and effectiveness with alumni, legislators, and the public. This will gain additional understanding and support needed to achieve the level of excellence we seek for our university.

You can take heart, remembering that at the outset I indicated that very few have been very accurate in predicting events and their peculiar impact on higher education, and that in nearly every instance things turn out to be less drastic or less painful than we originally had feared.

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*Glenny, Lyman A., *"Demographic and Related Issues for Higher Education in the 1980s"*, **Journal of Higher Education,** *1980, Vol. 51, No. 4, p. 365.*

Excerpt from Senate Bill No. 2977
Mississippi Legislature
Regular Session 1980

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SECTION 11. It is the intent of the Legislature that the comprehensive and uniform management information system plan, the development of which is funded under Section 3(3) (a), shall address a concept of uniform systems in a centralized or decentralized environment and cover the following areas:

— payroll
— personnel
— labors' distribution work force control
— financial accounting
— student records
— student financial aid
— billing and receivables
— accounts payable
— physical facilities, condition, utility

The plan should address uniform definitions and policies, the priority of projects, hardware and personnel resources required by time period, anticipated organizational changes, an implementation approach, and the availability and the evaluation of externally developed computer based software to meet system requirements. It shall be required that a plan for accomplishing the purposes of this subsection be received by the appropriation committees of the Legislature by January 2, 1981, regarding the status of this project.

SECTION 12. The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall develop and prepare reports to the 1981 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature to include:

(a) A plan for increasing, on a phased-in basis, the share of cost of educational expense borne by in-state graduate students and all out-of-state students.

(b) An assessment of all charges for tuition and fees on a per semester or quarter hour basis, excluding extension and resident centers and degree granting branches.

(c) A projected staffing plan, to be developed by the state universities through the coordination of the board of trustees. It is the intent of the Legislature that such plan cover fiscal years 1981 through 1986 and be related to anticipated enrollment, productivity goals, and program needs at each university. The faculty portion of this plan should be by rank and address specific productivity goals. The administrative and support portion of the plan should be by manpower classification and be related to projected faculty staffing and projected student enrollments. The structure and content of the staffing plan should also include:

(1) A uniform classification specification for common jobs.

(2) Area-wide surveys on salaries that address the competitive market of the universities.

(3) The development of a common fringe benefit structure.

(4) Appropriate range width for salaries and wages.

(5) The development of a system-wide employee policies and procedures handbook.

(d) The development of criteria for new academic programs that include:

(1) A description of new program requests including a. how the program will benefit the state; b. why it is needed; c. in what areas the institutions coordinate their offerings; d. in what areas duplication may occur; and e. from what source initial start-up support may be obtained.

(2) Guidelines for suspending or discontinuing new programs that do not meet the objectives stated in the new program requests. These guidelines should consider costs, faculty, enrollment and quality.

(3) The procedure followed by board staff to systematically and routinely audit the performance of new programs.

(e) A comparison of the present formula allocation of appropriations to the recommendation contained in "Pathways to Accountability and Excellence" dated June 1979.

(f) A study, by institution, of fees other than tuition paid by students as to methodology used by each institution to determine the adequacy of the charge in relation to cost to the institution.

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